Capacity Development—
The Pathway to Self-Reliance For Host Nations

By Ms. Sheryl Lewis

"Capacity development is the building of human, institutional, and infrastructure capacity to help societies develop secure, stable, and sustainable economies, governments, and other institutions through mentoring, training, education, and physical projects; the infusion of financial and other resources; and most important, the motivation and inspiration of people to improve their lives."[1]

<div align="right">Lieutenant General Henry J. Hatch (Retired)</div>

Capacity development has increasingly gained worldwide recognition as fundamental to effective governance, capability enhancement, ownership commitment, and successful program and project operation and sustainability. The U.S. government's experience in reconstruction of infrastructure in Iraq and Afghanistan—and the response and recovery actions from natural disasters in the United States, Haiti, and elsewhere—have helped raise the issue of capacity development to the forefront of our government's policy. Both U.S. civilian and military agencies are revising their methods and approaches to include capacity development as an integral part of their planning for programs and projects.

According to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, "The capabilities of the United States' allies and partners may be as important as its own, and building their capacity is arguably as important as, if not more so than, the fighting the United States does itself."[2]

There are many complex issues that can affect the success of programs and projects. Capacity development allows us to influence the outcomes by focusing on areas where we have some degree of control. Solutions to capacity development range from simple to complex, from short duration to long duration, and from low-dollar investment to very expensive. Responsible planning for each program or project requires increasing the likelihood of success in our operating environment. Effective capacity development requires forethought, planning, coordination, and commitment of all parties involved, with the common objective of achieving sustainable results.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has employed capacity development methods for decades, often as a means of preparing and equipping owners of infrastructure and other engineering products and services to manage, operate, and maintain them in a sustainable manner. USACE uses various training, teaching, and mentoring programs aimed at strengthening public and private sector management, engineering, and technical capabilities to support the self-reliance of host nations.

USACE Role

With more than 34,000 civilians and Soldiers, USACE has delivered management, engineering, and technical services to customers in more than 100 countries on a reimbursable basis. The mission areas are managed under three primary directorates: military programs, civil works, and contingency operations. Work is conducted by staff at headquarters, divisions, districts, laboratories, and centers.

Services include all engineering disciplines, construction, integrated water resources management and flood protection, hydropower generation, environmental protection, emergency response and recovery, and research and development. Some USACE partners on international programs

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and projects are the unified combatant commands, Army Service component commands, and United States Agency for International Development. Capacity development is important since it increases the likelihood that the program or project will be sustained—and the intended positive impacts realized. This has the following benefits:

■ Conditions are improved for people in the host nation.

■ The host nation is better able to manage its affairs without relying on external support.

■ The program or project is more likely to be successful over the long term, so the investment made by the U.S. government is better protected.

Building Partner Capacity

The Army has a broader role than that of the warfighter. Responsibilities include all areas of full spectrum operations, as outlined in Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*. This document, along with other directives, requires the Army to strengthen important capabilities that can be deployed in a variety of circumstances in support of our National Security Strategy. The Army Posture Statement for 2008 states, "Operations in the future will be executed in complex environments and will range from peace engagement to counterinsurgency to major combat operations. This era of persistent conflict will result in high demand for Army forces and capabilities."[3] The Army Campaign Plan for 2010 specifically addresses the need to focus on building partner capacity through security cooperation as a means to shape and prevent future conflict and strengthen U.S. partners abroad.

USACE is aligned with this broader mission and is accustomed to working as an enabler in any environment in full spectrum operations. USACE is well positioned to support the U.S. government with a structured, yet flexible, approach to capacity development that can be of benefit under any conditions, from stable peace to general war.

Whole-of-Government Approach

President Obama signed the Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development in September 2010. This directive requires U.S. government organizations to—

■ Adhere to a policy that is focused on development outcomes for host nations.

■ Increase the government's effectiveness as a partner nation.

■ Promote development and "harness development capabilities spread across government in support of common objectives."[4]

The whole-of-government approach requires U.S. government organizations to coordinate their efforts when assisting host nations. Achieving the right balance of "Defense, Diplomacy, and Development"—the keystones of the whole-of-government strategy[5]—for a situation requires a coordinated effort between military and civilian agencies.

Each organization has expertise that can be leveraged to optimize the results. This means that a specific mission must be addressed as a system, with each organization contributing the right expertise at the right time. The ability to view the context of an entire issue through the knowledge and perspectives of multiple players provides the best potential for an optimal solution.

Building on Lessons Learned

The valuable lessons learned on missions and specific projects over the years have taught USACE that the appropriate level of capacity development must be planned into the process; it does not "just happen." This planning not only involves defining the right level and approach for capacity development (scope) but also providing sufficient time and funding (schedule and budget) to conduct the capacity development activities at the program and project levels, to track performance, and to measure the outcomes over time.

The following themes stand out when lessons learned are reviewed in programs and projects that have applied capacity development:

■ The host nation must be an advocate for the program or project as a whole and fully support the specific capacity development actions developed by the stakeholders.

■ Capacity development must often be applied through the efforts of an integrated, multidisciplinary team with combined skills to match the situation. The stakeholder group must include representatives from the host nation but may also be composed of those from the United States, other national governments, multilateral organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

■ Consistent, effective capacity development takes place only when it is planned and budgeted in a program or project. This integration begins in the early planning phases to ensure that capacity development is not added later as an "unfunded mandate."

Framework and Process

USACE determined that a more formalized process for the planning and implementation of capacity development was needed to ensure that it is consistently addressed on its international programs and projects. The approach was designed to be compatible with the processes of other organizations involved in capacity development worldwide. This includes a framework with three levels, as shown in Figure 1, page 63:

■ Enabling Environment Level—Provides the structure of laws, regulations, policies, and guidance to support the organizations.

■ Organizational Level—Provides management requirements and guidelines for the organization and an environment in which individuals excel at their assigned tasks.
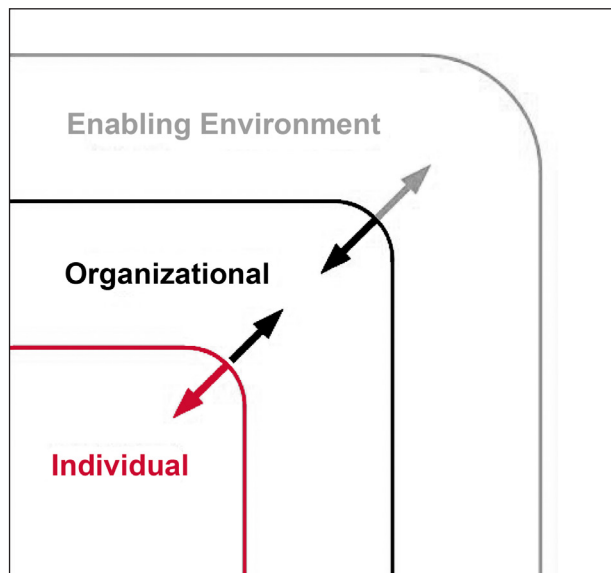
Figure 1. USACE Capacity Development Framework

- Individual Level—Works in an established organizational framework to maximize performance through continuous improvements, while increasing experience, knowledge, and technical skills.

The framework clarifies the structure under which capacity development takes place. These levels are not intended to operate independently, but rather as a system with each level complementing the others. Capacity development activities are interdependent in and between levels, and program or project success is unlikely unless capacity development is integrated across all three levels. USACE typically works in the organizational and individual levels on its programs and projects, but may be in a position to influence decisions made at the enabling environment level in certain cases, such as through its role as a leader in integrated water resource management.

USACE developed a five-step process to be used with all international programs and projects. The formality of this process is intended to drive consideration of capacity development needs; it does not mean that "one size fits all." The process must be flexible and tailored to fit the planning and implementation needs of each program and project. The five steps shown in Figure 2 are integrated into the normal program or project planning and implementation processes.

Implementation

The USACE business practice has been working to build a strong foundation for the adoption of a formalized capacity development planning
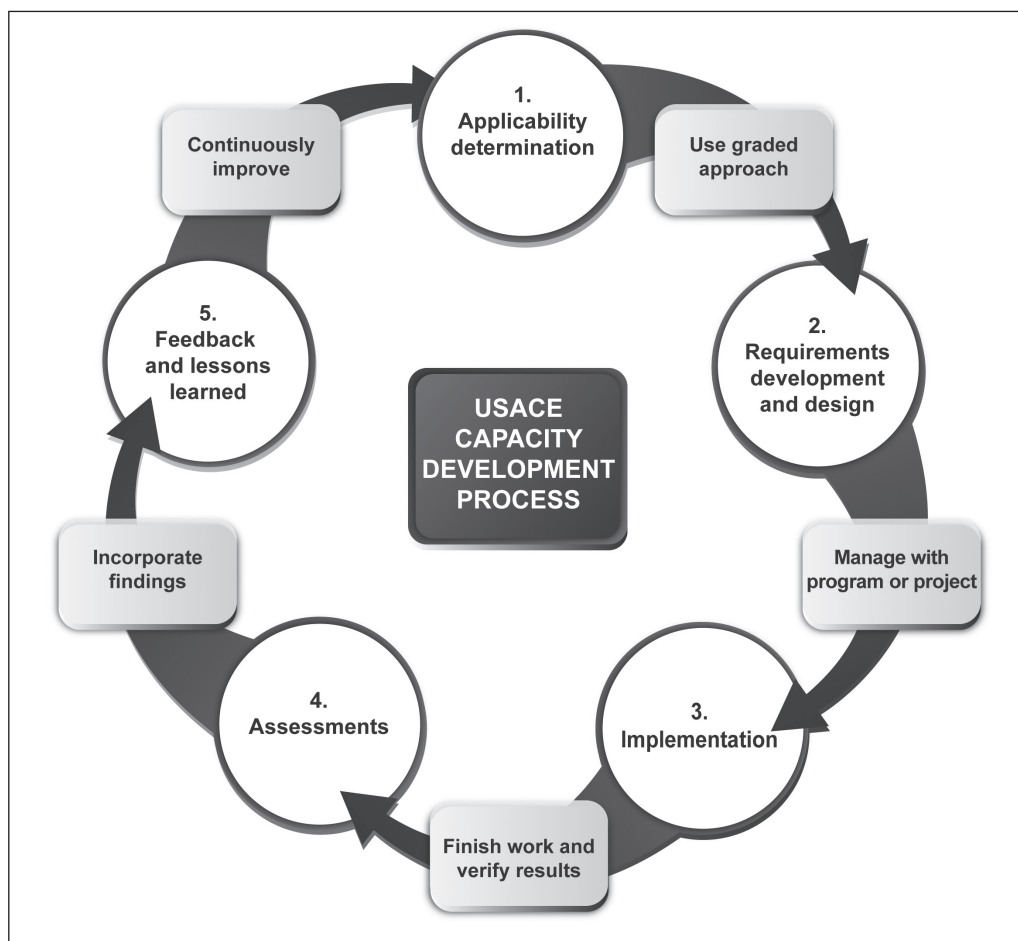

Figure 2. USACE Capacity Development Process

and implementation process, including policy and guidance documents, directives, and a series of online training sessions for its staff. The following initiatives are some of the capacity development activities presently underway on the USACE international programs and projects:

- *Africa*—USACE is building civil affairs capacity in the Kenyan army engineers to increase their appreciation for, knowledge of, and ability to build shared visions among populations affected by disasters and development efforts, thus enhancing the engineers' ability to create a sense of stability and security for local communities in affected areas.

- *Europe*—The Civil-Military Emergency Preparedness (CMEP) mission is to build all-hazard national and regional consequence management capacity. CMEP personnel have conducted 76 events in 28 countries since 1998, including Warsaw Initiative countries, Swaziland, and Guyana. The CMEP mission has now expanded worldwide.

- *Central and Southeast Asia*—The Afghan Engineer District–North (AED–N) is building the capacity of Afghan military engineers through its ongoing internship and outreach efforts with the National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA). Internships are offered to graduates of NMAA at the lieutenant level for a period of 21 weeks. At the completion of the internship, the lieutenants return to NMAA to teach civil engineering classes. In addition, the District participates in bimonthly NMAA faculty seminars and provides training on topics such as engineering, construction, safety, project scheduling, and leadership.

- *Middle East*—The Gulf Region District is working to support Iraq's ability to operate and maintain infrastructure through the following programs: training Baghdad's city workers on proper operations and maintenance of public water, sewage, solid waste, and transportation infrastructure; updating curriculum at Al Anbar University's Engineer College to meet current accreditation standards; and providing on-the-job training for 45 Iraqi associates who serve as construction and quality assurance representatives, public affairs officers, and program managers.

- *Central and South America*—The International Center for Integrated Water Resources Management, in collaboration with the National Water Authority—Autoridad Nacional del Agua (ANA)—of Peru and the World Bank, held a four-day workshop in Arequipa, Peru, with Chili River basin stakeholders focusing on building the capacity of the ANA planning staff to lead the implementation of Shared Vision Planning workshops in four other Peruvian basins. Follow-on workshops are being held to train local ANA staff on developing the hydrological modeling and decision support tools for collaborative water planning with stakeholders in the local basins.

Summary

Capacity development is now part of the normal planning process for the USACE international programs and projects. Successful results can generally be tied back to early planning, integration, and advocacy for capacity development. USACE will continue to be strong advocates and leaders in capacity development in support of sustainable outcomes for host nations.

Ms. Lewis is the USACE national program manager for capacity development and has overall responsibility for the capacity development business practice, which includes direction and guidance, policy development, oversight and monitoring, and training. She also serves as the USACE Interagency and International Services representative and coordinates with interagency customers and partners to support USACE missions in the United States Central Command area of responsibility, including Iraq and Afghanistan. She previously served as director of capacity development and strategic policy for the Army's Iraq Project and Contracting Office in Washington, D.C., and served with the Coalition Provisional Authority both in Washington, D.C., as the private sector development assistant, and in Baghdad, Iraq, as the governance office assistant. She holds a master's in international commerce and policy from George Mason University.

Endnotes

[1]Engineer Regulation (ER) 5-1-16, USACE Capacity Development–International, 30 June 2009, p. 2.

[2]Robert Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009, Volume 88, Number 1. *<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63717/robert-m-gates/a-balanced-strategy>*, accessed 12 January 2011.

[3]Pete Geren and George W. Casey, *A Campaign Quality Army with Joint and Expeditionary Capabilities: Army Posture Statement, Fiscal Year 2008*. Posture Statement presented to the 110th Congress, 2d session, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 2008, p. 2.

[4]Fact Sheet: U.S. Global Development Policy, *<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/22/fact-sheet-us-global-development-policy>*, accessed 20 January 2011.

[5]Jim Garamone, "New National Strategy Takes 'Whole-of-Government' Approach," U.S. Department of Defense—News, Washington, D.C., May 27, 2010. *<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=59377>*, accessed 19 January 2010.